



## **Support for House Bill 942**

Dear Chairman Barve and Members of the Committee:

The Chesapeake Legal Alliance supports HB 942 because we believe it represents a great opportunity to reexamine the current incentive structure that directs which environmental management practices are selected to meet various goals and regulatory mandates. We certainly appreciate the important role of a well-designed stream restoration project. However, a stream restoration project should never be undertaken simply as a replacement for an alternative environment management project or practice. With finite, even scarce, public resources to put toward environmental investments, it is critical that our State and local governments be thoughtful about how to allocate resources to maximize their impact.

Maximizing impact requires careful consideration of the availability of co-benefits from different stormwater management or other environmental projects, as well as the highly variable needs of different watersheds and different communities. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, all of us understand how many different functions and features a single smart phone possesses, replacing the job of 50 gadgets we might have had to purchase two decades ago. In that same vein, it is important to recognize that certain environmental projects confer a vast array of social, environmental, and economic benefits, while others serve a single or few purposes; we must prioritize these projects that deliver numerous benefits and quantify all of these benefits, not just the ability to control one or a small number of pollutants.

With very limited public resources relative to the massive public health, environmental, and climate needs and threats we face, we must be mindful to invest carefully in projects and practices that address as many of these threats as possible. We cannot afford to make decisions based on the path of least resistance, administrative simplicity, or based on past contractual relationships. It is not clear why, according to data from the Maryland Department of the Environment, stream restoration projects were used to satisfy municipal stormwater permit requirements more than any other project or practice and more than five times more than all stormwater filtration and infiltration projects combined.

HB 942 will have the effect of requiring us to take a fresh look at the state of the science, at our past decisions, and our future needs and help chart a new course that could maximize climate resilience, environmental justice, and water quality restoration for decades to come.

For these reasons, the Chesapeake Legal Alliance supports HB 942 and urges a favorable report. For more information, contact Evan Isaacson at [evan@chesapeakelegal.org](mailto:evan@chesapeakelegal.org).